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## **Making sense of political ideology in mediatized political communication: A discourse analytic perspective**

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### **Abstract**

Political discourse becomes more and more ‘mediatized’ nowadays but, as I argue in this article, mediatization should be considered neither as a testament to ‘de-ideologization’ nor as a restyling of the ‘inherently ideological’ contemporary political communication. Ideology, I claim, is a potentiality of mediatized political discourse and as such, it rests with the generic capacity of the latter to recontextualize symbolisms from the institutional past serving the ordering of the institutional present. How is the recontextualization of symbolic meanings facilitated by the aesthetic and affective qualities of different media genres? In what ways does recontextualized discourse serve the neoliberal order of the present? Lying at the heart of the ideological analysis of political communication, these are questions which can be insightfully addressed through a discourse analytics of mediatization as the one I apply here on two political advertisements from the Greek general election of January 2015.

**Keywords:** ideology, mediatized politics, discourse, recontextualization, genres, power, neoliberalism, Greek election 2015

### **Introduction**

The study of contemporary political communication is massively oriented towards a ‘pragmatist’ sensibility which has, allegedly, signalled a wide shift from the imaginary of passionate and combative – ‘ideological’ – politics to the disenchanting experience of

bureaucratic and managerial – ‘neoliberal’ – politics; from ideational inspiration and rhetorical aptitude in candidates’ speeches to the simplifying sound-bites and personalized-dramatized appeals in the so-called ‘mediatized politics’ (Balmas and Sheafer 2013; Castells 2009, Gurevitch, Coleman and Blumler 2009). Mediatization has been often theorised in an abstract and loose way, as a structural condition or meta-process of late modernity related to the transformative impact of media institutions and technologies (see Hjarvard 2008, Krotz 2007, Strömbäck 2008). Problematically, however, such a macroscopic approach does not tell us much about the performative use of the techno-institutional affordances of media in everyday politics. As several scholars have succinctly pointed out, the viewpoint of whom I advocate here, mediatization (and ideology as I shall claim) becomes a meaningful and consequential political phenomenon insofar as it is encountered in the form of specific ‘practices’, that is, in the form of conventional, institutionally embedded, patterns of (self)representation-(self)performance which candidates and other officials are routinely subjected, thereby ‘learning’ how to effectively communicate with the media and their audiences (Couldry 2012, Davis 2007, Thompson 2005).

In this article, I shall try to ‘rediscover’, so to speak, the potential of the institutional practices of mediatization to also act as discursive practices in which the ideology of political parties is (re)configured and (re)negotiated. Particularly, I shall address questions regarding the nature of political ideology in mediatized discourse – *what do we actually study when we study ideology in mediatized politics?* – and the relevance of (mediatized) ideological discourse for, maybe, the most important pragmatic concern in politics, that is, the effective exercise of power – *in what ways can ideology serve the contemporary neoliberal ordering of society?*

There is a corpus of seminal works in political science and critical cultural theory which, problematizing the traditional-exclusionary conceptions of ideology in both disciplines – as ‘belief systems’ and ‘false consciousness’, respectively – emphatically relate ideology to the

concept of *discourse*; discourse as the realm of language and signification, in general, whereby practices are constituted as meaningful performative acts. As I will demonstrate in the first part of this article – ‘theoretical anchorages in the study of ideology and political communication’ – although these works provide an insightful starting point for critically revisiting the study of ideology in the context of mediatization, they are still anchored in some problematic (consensualist) assumptions about the meaning-and-power-making capacity of discourse which, ultimately, leave us with two, unhelpfully, macro-theoretical and categorical interpretations of the ideological status of contemporary political communication: the ‘de facto de-ideologized’ and the ‘a priori ideological’ political communication, respectively.

Contra to these interpretations, in the second part of this article – ‘towards an analytical understanding of the ideological potential of political communication’ – I will make the case that ideology is a potentiality of political communication; it lies in the potential of mediatized discourse to rearticulate and reorganize – *recontextualize* – other discourses and practices of symbolic meaning from the past serving, in various and often contradicting ways, the (neoliberal) ordering of the present. As a potentiality of mediatization, ideology can no longer be studied at the level of ‘grand theory’; the study of ideology, I will contend, is a matter of the discourse analytics of the different mediatic practices of political communication, particularly, of the *multimodal and critical discourse analysis* of ‘genres’ (discursive manifestations of practices) as these genres emerge in different ‘media texts’ (material instantiations of genres). Finally, in the third part of this article – ‘ideological fermentations in the Greek general election of 25 January 2015’ – I will use political advertising, as an example of mediatized political communication, in a case study from the Greek general election of January 2015, to empirically illustrate the discourse analytic perspective this article seeks to foreground in the study of ideology and political communication.

## **Theoretical Anchorages in the Study of Ideology and Political Communication**

### *De facto de-ideologized political communication*

In political science, ideology has been, broadly, associated with the study of some diachronically influential political ideas. As Michael Foley has put it, “it is important to know the identity and significance of these ideas which – whether we realize it or not – are currently shaping politics in the world” (1994, 4). However, the shaping impact of ideas in political practice is not the privilege of some widely known ‘grand’ belief systems, such as liberalism, conservatism and socialism, to which several works have confined the study of ideology so far (see Adams 2001, Heywood 2003). It is rather a property inherent in political discourse *per se*, since it is by and through discourse that all systems of thought are articulated and communicated as meaningful and consequential ideas and acts. As Brock et al. put it, ‘real ideological work is rhetorical: it is performed in society within the communicative acts that constitute orientation, justification, and legitimation and thus become the substance of political action’ (2005, 40).

The history of ideas, to be sure, is central to this ideological work. Political institutions always need to, discursively, ground their particular motives and frames into the broader political traditions that have diachronically structured the popular perception of the nature of government and public good in the society – “the texture of history and past rationalizations” (Brock et al. 2005, 47). They need to do so because it is through the consistent, philosophically grounded, use of language that a template of shared values and rationales can be reconstructed, providing justification for the building of a strong and long-term political consensus which is essential to the effective exercise of political power.

To the chagrin of many political scientists, however, contemporary political communication, as it is performed in different media formats, such as news bulletins, political advertising, televised debates, etc., has failed to commit to certain philosophical traditions of politics.

Mediatized political communication is rather argued to be traversed by an ‘aestheticized’ and ‘sensationalized’ interpretive framework which prioritizes personalities, slogans and spectacle over philosophically grounded argument; what some theorists refer to as colonization of the political logic by the media logic (Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999, Meyer 2002). The media logic is, according to its critics, ephemeral; it encourages the short-term and parodic winning of votes instead of the formation of long-term consensus, having, ultimately, a debilitating effect on the exercise of power (see Brock et al. 2005). In a nutshell, in the age of mediatization, political communication is *de facto de-ideologized*.

Against this backcloth of ‘de-ideologization’, I would like to argue that mediatization should not be simplistically taken to entail the replacement of a historically informed political normativity by an ahistorical media ecology, thereby vindicating the ‘end of history’ and ‘end of politics’ evangelism (Fukuyama 1992). The aesthetic and affective aspects of mediatized discourse may not allow the systematic and coherent capitalization on a liberal rationalism or a socialist ethics, for example, but they do carry with them and reproduce historically loaded and, by extension, socio-politically influential institutional sedimentations (Corner 2000, Street 2001). For instance, as several critical media scholars have argued, by highlighting the personalist, conversationalist and dramatist aspects of the political process so as to attract the attention of the audience-consumer, mediatized discourse, crucially, contributes to the amplification of certain neoliberal trends, such as individualism, commercialization and managerialism. In doing so, it serves to substitute welfare politics for an untamed market politics (Mercille 2014) ending up to the ‘*loss of a wider deliberative language for politics*’ (Couldry 2010, 86).

#### *A priori ideological political communication*

Behind the critical interrogation of neoliberal media politics lies a broader theoretical approach to ideological discourse, paradigmatically different from the static view of ‘philosophically

grounded language orientated at the building of socio-political consensus' which the liberal political theory of discourse has advocated. Originated in the Marxist and, predominately, neo-Marxist theory of discourse, this critical approach conceives ideology as a 'socially determined act of signification oriented at the establishment of political hegemony'. In the Marxian legacy, ideology serves socio-political stability, not by rationally building political consensus but by culturally spreading a form of 'false consciousness' that prevents working classes from realizing the very asymmetries and interests that are imbricated with the capitalist system of production (Hawkes 1996, Rosen 1996). Neo-Marxists, on the other hand, have offered a less reductionist/determinist insight into the critical study of ideology by arguing that what keeps working classes adhered to the established social order is not necessarily their deception but their chronic inculcation with the common values and beliefs that underpin this social order, what Althusser calls 'interpellation' (1984). It is worth noting here that these values and beliefs, as Gramsci (1971) has contended, are not implanted with a given meaning, always favourable to the dominant classes, but they, historically, acquire different meanings through the class struggle for 'cultural leadership' and 'hegemony'. Stuart Hall, drawing on the work of Marxist linguist Volosinov, has shown that this hegemonic struggle is largely a 'politics of signification' waged over and through discourse or, as Volosinov himself had put it, 'the sign becomes an arena of class struggle' (in Hall 1982, 77).

In line with critical media theory, the Marxist/neo-Marxist critique takes the aestheticized and sensationalized mediascape – both in its traditional, print and electronic, form (newspapers, radio, television), and in its new, digital, form (smart phones, tablets) – as the primary locus where the politics of signification is deployed nowadays (see Hall 1982, Fuchs 2016, Sahin 1980). What this critique has particularly added to the understanding of the neoliberal media politics is that the triumph of the socially disintegrating onslaught of market ideas, embedded as they are in the media logic, is not an end in itself for neoliberalism but the

means via which several social interests and relations of domination, in terms of class but also gender, race, sexuality, etc., are sustained and reproduced by being normalized and naturalized in hegemonic coagulations (Couldry 2010, Fuchs 2016, Hall 2011). In a nutshell, in the age of mediatization, political communication is *a priori ideological*.

Summing up, if for the liberal political theory of discourse, ideology serves to establish a socio-political consensus *insofar as* political discourse is consistently and systematically re-grounded in the grand narratives of the past, for the critical cultural theory of discourse, ideology *always* serves to manufacture a socio-political consent since political discourse, through establishing and reproducing a hegemonic meaning, effectively, dissimulates and/or normalizes social dissent. Regarding mediatized political communication, the critical theory offers us a way out from the nihilistic thesis of de-ideologization elucidating, at the same time, the hegemonization of neoliberalism as a media logic and as a social condition of late modern capitalism. However, both the liberal-political and the critical-cultural paradigms in the study of discourse-ideology suffer from a consensualist perception of the historicity (as philosophical coherence and homogeneity of values, respectively) and power dynamic (as building of consensus and misrecognition of dissent, respectively) of political discourse which does not do justice to the complex reality of discursive practices, particularly to the hybridity and homogeneity that strikes at the heart of modern political discursive formations (Thompson 1990). Hence, in what follows, I would like to contemplate on the implications that discursive hybridity and heterogeneity raise for the historicity and power dynamic of mediatized political discourse and, by extension, for the place and role of ideology in contemporary political communication.



## **Towards an Analytical Understanding of the Ideological Potential of Political Communication**

From the vantage point of post-structuralist discourse theory, hybridity and heterogeneity are genealogical properties of political discourse per se; in all its manifestations – mediatized and non-mediatized – political discourse is ‘radically contingent’, in Laclau’s and Mouffe’s (1985) terms, or, as Freedon (2003) proposes it, inherently ‘contestable and indeterminate’. By no means, does this contingency and contestability amount, however, as it has been celebratorily pronounced, to a post-modern ‘hyper-reality’ (Baudrillard 1994) and ‘semiotic democracy’ (Fiske 1987), where political meaning is ‘lost’ in ever-floating simulations and political power is exercised in a post-symbolic/neo-material, algorithmic, manner (Lash 2007). The fluidity and complexity of late modern societies is not absolute and chaotic. Regimes of meaning still emerge as moments of ‘closure’ and ‘de-contestation’ of the discursive open-endedness, giving rise to socially organizing and ordering practices (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999, Freedon 2003). One such practice is, as I wish to argue, ideology: *the discursive practice of recontextualization of symbolisms from the past that serves the ordering of the present.*

Recontextualisation, which has been explicitly or implicitly recognized as the quintessence of ideology by several discourse theorists (see Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999, Kissas 2017, Krzyzanowski 2016, Wodak and Fairclough 2010), is the key to understanding the historicity and power dynamic of political discourse beyond the consensualist anchorages discussed earlier on. Recontextualization appertains to the dis-embedding of, already established in a specific socio-semantic context, clusters of symbolic meaning and their re-embedding in a different context (such as that of political communication), organized by the logics, routines and conventions (e.g. genres of political communication) of the latter. Hence, by virtue of its recontextualizing dynamic, the discursive practice (of ideology) is both

reproductive and transformative (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001), it is *constitutive* of new conceptual devices which “[...] are not just additions or elements of a meta-language tied to representation and abstraction of social action, but often become outright replacements of discursive constructions – in the sense of representations – of social change or of those that are undertaking and/or underdoing some rapid and very abrupt social processes” (Krzyzanowski 2016, 309).

The conceptual productiveness of recontextualization orders and organizes social relations by establishing regimes of meaning, as I pointed out earlier on, which veil and misrecognize the radical contingency of the social. Ideology, in other words, performs a dissimulative role but in *ontological*, not epistemological terms (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999). By reconstructing a specific version of the social as ‘given’ and ‘taken-for-granted’ (e.g. the individualist and consumerist version of the neoliberal nomenclature), ideology mystifies not any ‘positive’ state of sociality (e.g. that society is ‘truly’ collectivist and classless) but “the precarious character of any positivity, the impossibility of any ultimate structure” (Laclau 1990, 92), thereby ascribing neoliberalism a post-hegemonic status at the very moment neoliberalism is still caught up in a discursive network of hegemonic struggles (Cammaerts 2015). Neoliberalism is, indeed, capable, owing to recontextualization, of renewing and reinventing itself through different political projects, such as the Thatcherite and Blairite or Cameronite and Brownite ones in the UK (see Gamble 2013, Hall 2011, Wright 2015), but it is exactly this recontextualizing dynamic which, at the same time, does not allow neoliberalism to enjoy an absolute total hegemony. As Fairclough has, succinctly, put it “the neoliberal global order is an incomplete project rather than a *fait accompli*” (2000, 148).

By this token, hegemony does not become redundant as a concept; quite the contrary, it acquires a much more constructive analytical value. It complements discourse theory with an indispensable critical dimension (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999, Schou 2016) which

reminds us that recontextualization in mediatized political discourse is not a random, presuppositionless, recycling of symbolisms for the sake of aesthetic and affective pleasure. Recontextualization is aesthetic and affective as much as it is social and political, since the way it, aesthetically and affectively, inserts symbols into media representations, and rework them, is always-already conditioned by the hegemonic struggles of the socio-political context wherein this reworking occurs (Wodak and Fairclough 2010).

It is important to note here, however, that recontextualization is socially conditioned in the sense that it is an *institutionally embedded practice*, not a macro-structurally determined process the social (dissimulative-normalizing) effect of which could be predicted in advance (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999). Hence, the logic and modus operandi of recontextualization is not always the same, regardless of the particular aesthetic-affective articulations-institutionalizations of discourse or, what we may call, *genre*<sup>1</sup> of political communication. From this point of view, hegemony returns as a heuristic concept in the critical study of ideological media politics. This means that hegemony does not tell us why neoliberalism is, homogenously and concordantly, reproduced (as if it was an already accomplished order) but how neoliberalism is, heterogeneously and discordantly, constituted and reconstituted (as an *ordering* in an ongoing accomplishment) through the different generic practices of political communication, thereby being able to permeate parties of the Right and the Left, spheres of the private and public life, old and new media.

To conclude, ideology operates as a *potentiality* of mediatized political discourse and ‘the word *potential* is crucial, for here the activation of meaning is a social accomplishment’ (Hurdley and Dicks 2011, 281, emphasis original), not a taken for granted meta-structure of semiosis. Instead of dwelling, therefore, on abstract paradigmatic conceptions of what ideology is and what it does in the social world (as if ideology had one and single form and a homogenous impact), we need to empirically examine how ideology is accomplished, as the

recontextualizing potential of genres, *in situ* and *in actu*, as Foucault (1977) would suggest, that is, in specific institutional practices of political communication as they are schematically morphed in media texts<sup>2</sup>. In a nutshell, instead of a ‘grand theory’ about the ideological status of political communication, we need a ‘discourse analytics’ of its ideological potential.

The discourse analytics I propose looks, first, into the *multimodality* of media texts so as to explore, what Kristeva refers to as, ‘the insertion of history into a text’ (in Fairclough 1992, 270) – discussed later on under the ‘historicity of genres’ – that is, the modes of presentation and visual-verbal correspondences by means of which symbolisms from the past are inserted into texts in the forms of aesthetic-affective qualities of the performativity of these texts (Chouliaraki 2006). Discourse analytics also looks into the *multifunctionality* of media texts so as to critically explore (*critical discourse analysis*) what Kristeva refers to as ‘the insertion of text into history’ (in Fairclough 1992, 270) – discussed later on under the ‘the power dynamics of recontextualization’ – that is, the emotive-cognitive and spatiotemporal frames of recontextualization which enact, respectively, forms of institutional agency and ordering (see Chouliaraki 2006).

In what follows, I apply this discourse analytics to political advertising which I take as an example-exemplar of mediatized political communication, particularly to two election broadcasts produced by the two major parties-contenders in the run-up to the Greek parliamentary election of January 2015. Political advertisements, albeit originally produced for television, are now available at and accessible through a variety of different media platforms, such as parties’ official websites and YouTube channels, still constituting one of the most popular, multi-generic, sophisticated and professionalized platforms of political communication (Gunter, Saltzis and Campbell 2015, Rackaway 2014, Scammell and Langer 2006). On the other hand, the January 2015 Greek general election provides a ‘paradigmatic case study’ (see Flyvbjerg 2006) in the sense that, by referring to a context plummeted by the

urgent pragmatic considerations of and neoliberal remedies to a collapsing economy (see next part), it resonates with the purpose of this article which is to show that ideology is still an integral aspect of the ‘overarching’ pragmatism and neoliberalism in mediatized political communication.

### **Ideological Fermentations in the Greek General Election of January 2015**

On 25 January 2015, Greeks headed to the polls for a snap general election which was rendered constitutionally inevitable after the failure of the parliament to elect President of the Republic. The election was won, for the first time in its history, by the ‘Coalition of the Radical Left’, SYRIZA, without an absolute majority of seats though. The incumbent party, ‘New Democracy’, ND, came second while its governmental partner, ‘Panhellenic Socialist Movement’, PASOK, one of the major political parties throughout the post-dictatorship era, emerged as the smallest party in the new parliament.

This election widely attracted the interest and raised the anxiety of the European elites and policy-makers, on the one hand, since it took place shortly prior to the expiration of the second bail-out programme the former government had agreed with the country’s creditors (Nardelli and Rankin 2015). It intrigued the European public opinion, on the other, since it was almost certain to be won by a party self-defined as radically left-wing with an unnegotiable commitment to terminate austerity (Nardelli and Rankin 2015). In this section, I shall present some findings from the analysis of two political advertisements launched by ND and SYRIZA, respectively, in the run-up to the election, focusing on the ‘historicity of genres’ and the ‘power dynamics of rerecontextualisation’.

#### *The historicity of genres*

The two election broadcasts I examine here, ‘We make the pitch’ by ND and ‘Hope!’ by SYRIZA<sup>3</sup>, draw on two generic rubrics of political advertising, the so-called ‘*cinéma-vérité*’

format, which comprises the last part of SYRIZA's broadcast and monopolises ND's entire one, and the '*neutral reporter*' format, which comprises the first part of SYRIZA's broadcast. Typically, the '*cinéma-vérité*' genre 'depicts candidates in real life settings interacting with people' (McNair 2007, 96), while the '*neutral reporter*' genre employs an independent speaker-observer to make, through voiceover, some factual statements related to the party or the candidate (McNair 2007). Let me elaborate in some more length on the multimodal articulation of these two generic patterns in the texts under examination.

ND's '*cinéma-vérité*' broadcast is organized around the interaction of the leader, Mr Samaras, with a group of young boys who play football in a public square. Making use of the sport metaphor as its mode of presentation, this broadcast ritualistically bestows the leader with the demotic imaginary of 'leader-coach' (visually: Samaras' effective control of the ball; verbally: *'the point is to know where you want to go and go with a plan, go with knowledge without stopping for a moment'*) and the kids with the demotic imaginary of 'citizens-trained players' (visually: kids gather around the leader-coach to listen carefully to what he has to say; verbally: [Samaras] *'keep training and we'll keep working'*). Game-playing rituals in general and football-playing ones in particular, as popular patterns of representation of politics in the age of mediatization, are argued to be linked, thanks to their capacity of binding a whole country together in support of a team, to the building of national identities (see Street 2001). Indeed, ND's mission, as Samaras' exposition reveals (*'for a country to play ball, as for a team, it needs a pitch; and we make the pitch for her, a new one'*), is about nation-rebuilding by means of the effective pedagogy of leader's coaching. Hence, the football-playing ritualism foregrounds the national imaginary of a wisely instructed and tirelessly worked (pedagogical) radical reconstruction of the country, thereby recontextualizing symbols of the '*paternalist modernization*' discourse on which the party has been founded<sup>4</sup>.

In SYRIZA's broadcast, on the other hand, the cinéma-vérité is organized around the interaction of the leader, Mr Tsipras, with a mass of supporters who cheer and applaud the leader, trying at the same time to share a moment with him (e.g. a hug or handshaking). In an aesthetic motif which resembles the ritualism of a political rally and a mass movement, the relationship between leader and ordinary person is not iconized now as a relationship of coach-trainee but as one of celebrity-fan. Hence, SYRIZA's 'movement' appears to owe its dynamic not to the pedagogical politics of coaching but to the ironic and narcissistic politics of celebrity (Chouliaraki 2013), manifested in the 'media omnipresence' throughout this broadcast – e.g. the flash fares that inundate the leader-supporter interaction and Tsipras' prominent 'televised moments' that precede the interaction scenes.

In the 'neutral reporter' part of SYRIZA's broadcast, the focus is no longer the leader-supporter interaction but the post-election reality, communicated as an 'avoided disaster' (visually: extra-terrestrial images of an asteroid followed by fast-moving alternation of stunning panoramic city shots; verbally: '*On January 26<sup>th</sup> [the day after the election] an asteroid will pass close by the Earth, the sun will rise at 7:34, shops and banks will open after 8:00, parents will continue to worry about their children grades but no family will have to worry about ending up on the streets*'), which mocks the catastrophism and fearmongering of SYRIZA's opponents – an 'Armageddon' would be awaiting Greece if SYRIZA won the election (Boukala and Dimitrakopoulou 2017). The neutral reporter genre effects, therefore, an ecstatic impersonalization which envisages the post-election reality as an 'ideal normality'; a national imaginary of redress and restitution which appertains to all the people indiscriminately, as if all social categories (like the factory workers, farmers, builders and scientists that can be traced in the imagery of this broadcast) have suffered the same from the economic crisis and the policies of austerity that followed it. Hence, in its 'apocalyptic politics' of ideal normality, the ritualism of the avoided disaster promises the 'moral vindication of the

non-privileged'<sup>5</sup>, thereby becoming symbolically reminiscent of the ethno-populism of resistance on which the Greek Left has largely capitalized throughout the post-dictatorship years (Pappas 2014). Similarly, in its ironic politics of celebrity ('cinéma-vérité'), the rallying ritualism promises a 'mild national insurgence' (*'the society stands up straight, we start the real negotiation [with Europe]'*) and hope for everyone (*'On January 26<sup>th</sup>, Greece will be a country of hope for everyone'*), both 'nodal points' of the ethno-populism of resistance (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2014).

Summing up, the football-playing ritualism in ND's broadcast and the rallying ritualism in SYRIZA's one (cinéma-vérité) invest political discourse with the aesthetic quality of dramatization (in the form of footballization and celebritization, respectively), at the very moment they reinvest dramaticity with a pedagogical (leader's coaching role) and narcissistic (leader's celebrity status) meaning, respectively, by virtue of which, symbols from the past – paternalist modernization and ethno-populism of resistance – are invoked, historicizing the 'cinéma-vérité' genre. In a similar dual aesthetic movement, the disaster ritualism in SYRIZA's broadcast (neutral reporter) (re)invests dramatization, qua ecstatic impersonalization this time, with an apocalyptic meaning (ideal normality in the aftermath of an avoided disaster) which inserts into the neutral reporter genre the symbolism of the ethno-populism of resistance. Let me now proceed with examining the forms of agency and ordering that the recontextualization of these symbols enacts in the service of the institutional exercise of power.

### *The power dynamics of recontextualization*

As a generically performative practice of mediatization, recontextualization is 'doubly articulated' to the institutional exercise of power. On the one hand, recontextualization confronts its viewer (reflexively) with different forms of agency by emotionally structuring the way she thinks about what she sees represented in media texts, i.e. anger and enthusiasm have been found to encourage a 'partisan', while hope and anxiety a 'cross-partisan' agency (see



Ridout and Searles 2011). ‘The way we feel structures the way we think and ultimately the way we act’, Castells writes (2009, 192), hence, the agency-enacting capacity of discourse can be textually addressed with reference to the *emotive-cognitive* framing of recontextualization. On the other hand, recontextualization confronts its viewer (unreflexively) with different forms of social ordering by structuring representation in spatial and temporal ways that (ontologically) mystify the sociohistorical contingency of symbolic meanings, i.e. recontextualization as continuity or discontinuity with the past and as de-historicization (see Thompson 1990). Representations of space and time, what Bakhtin (1981) calls ‘chronotope’ and Chouliaraki (2006) ‘spacetime’, fundamentally shape the course of social reproduction and change, hence, the ordering capacity of discourse can be textually addressed with reference to the *spatiotemporal* framing of recontextualization. In what follows, I will discuss the particular emotive-cognitive and spatiotemporal frames via which the recontextualization of ‘paternalist modernization’ and ‘ethno-populist resistance’ performs its pragmatic role in the institutional exercise of power.

To begin with, the football-playing ritualism in ND’s broadcast unleashes a ‘masculinist energy’ which is gradually channelled into hope: thanks to the hard training and good coaching, the initially hesitant and reserved ‘boy’ (in the opening of the broadcast, prior to their conversation, one of the kids, Nicolas, stands before the leader with a worried look on his face) will, eventually, become a decisive and strong ‘man’ (in the closing scene, when the conversation is over, Nicolas stands on the side of the leader looking forward with a confident smile). Consequently, leader’s coaching mediation signals the transition from the ‘boyish’ anxiety to a ‘masculinist’ hope. In SYRIZA’s disaster ritualism (neutral reporter), the envisaged ideal normality is interweaved with a different kind of hope, what could be referred as ‘hedonistic’ hope, the hope that the post-election reality will, eventually, signal the restoration of the pre-crisis imaginary of unconditional and undisrupted prosperity for all

(Triandafyllidou, Gropas and Kouki 2013); of a prosperity without concerns and without anxiety (*'no family will have to worry about ending up on the streets'*). Subsequently, the celebrity frenzy of the rallying ritualism, in the cinéma-vérité part of the broadcast, turns hedonistic hope into an enthusiasm about the historic vindication of the non-privileged.

Hope is a moderate emotion which urges the viewer to seek more-new information about the subject that generates hope (Marcus 2013), in this case about ND's 'national rebuilding' (paternalist modernization) and SYRIZA's 'ideal normality' (ethno-populism of resistance). Enthusiasm, on the other hand, is an intense emotion which, instead of information-processing, calls for immediate action alongside party-line/disposition (Marcus 2013), in this case for unquestionably joining Tsipras' 'mass movement' (ethno-populism of resistance). In other words, hope is associated with an 'emotiocognition of surveillance' (Castells 2009), enacting a cross-partisan agency of national palingenesis which appeals to those who, irrespective of their political background, believe that the country needs a new direction. On the contrary, enthusiasm is associated with an 'emotiocognition of disposition' (Castells 2009), enacting a partisan-leftist agency which appeals to those who believe that with SYRIZA the Left would be in government for the first time (Prifti 2015).

Moving now to the spatiotemporal framing of recontextualization, we can notice that the football-playing ritualism of ND's broadcast unfolds in an indeterminate spacetime – there is nothing temporal or historical about a bunch of young boys who play football in a public square – which entails the 'eternalization' of the symbol of paternalist modernization. Contrarily, both the rallying and the disaster ritualism of SYRIZA's broadcast unfold in a determinate, present, spacetime – the day after the election in Greece (January 26<sup>th</sup>, repeated over and over again throughout the broadcast) – which results in the 'temporalization' of the symbol of ethno-populist resistance. As I wish to argue, recontextualization qua eternalization

reifies a patriarchal and neoliberal order, while recontextualization qua temporalization mystifies the reactionary proclivities of the populist order.

First, eternalization leaves unquestioned the ‘mutation’ and exclusion of women from the pedagogy of coaching-training. Indeed, Nicolas’s (one of the boys in ND’s broadcast) reference to the current, difficult, situation in Greece reflects neither his own nor his mother’s opinion but his father’s one (*‘my father says that the things are difficult’*). The male-father’s voice is, therefore, ‘naturalised’ and ‘normalized’ as the official voice of the family, especially as far as public affairs are concerned. Second, eternalization euphemizes the recent socio-economic predicaments in Greece, such as the fall in people’s income, the cuts in pensions and the galloping unemployment, as the difficult which are, however, the right decisions (Samaras: *‘Sometimes, if you want to do something the right way, you have to pass through difficulties’*). In doing so, it serves to moralize the neoliberal policies of austerity that Samaras’ government had to implement after agreeing with Greece’s creditors on a second bailout for the country.

Temporalization, on the other hand, although it raises awareness of the current, rising poverty and unemployment (reference to people who worry about losing their homes), putting under question the neoliberal policies of austerity, it leaves unquestioned the impossibility of all-inclusiveness and indivisibility which underlies the imaginary of the non-privileged people (Greece will be a country of hope for everyone). It leaves unquestioned, in other words, the potential of the big discursive tent referred as ‘the non-privileged’ to function as a shelter for those who want to hide and protect their privileges. At the same time, temporalization deprives Tsipras’ populist movement of these socio-historical referents that would allow the (allegedly) radical populism of SYRIZA to be effectively differentiated, as a form of ‘inclusive and democratic’ populism (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2014), from the reactionary populism of conservative right-wing parties, such as the Independent Greeks (it is not coincidental, after all, that this party would join SYRIZA in the post-election coalition government).

Summing up, in its emotive-cognitive mode of operation, recontextualization confronts, reflexively, the viewer of ND's *cinéma-vérité* and SYRIZA's neutral reporter broadcasts with a cross-partisan agency of national palingenesis (masculinist and hedonistic hope), necessary for two national parties that compete not only for a fair number of seats in parliament but for the majority and, therefore, the exercise of executive-legislative power that rests with it. It also confronts the viewer of SYRIZA's *cinéma-vérité* broadcast with a partisan-leftist agency (enthusiasm), necessary for a relatively new political formation that seeks to consolidate its place as the leading party of the Left. At the same time, in its spatiotemporal mode of operation, recontextualization works, unreflexively, towards the reification of a patriarchal and neoliberal order (eternalization), legitimatizing the policies of austerity that ND is committed to implement, as well as, towards the mystification of a reactionary populist order (temporalization) legitimizing SYRIZA's 'tamed' radicalism.

### **Conclusion**

As it can be inferred from the preceding (multimodal and critical discourse) analysis, the different genres of political advertising, as discursive manifestations of the institutional practices of mediatization, cannot be light-heartedly reduced to a single and homogenous media logic which, allegedly, assists the neoliberal totality. They are rather traversed by an aesthetic-affective (dramatization as footballization, celebritization and ecstatic impersonalization) and socio-historical (hopeful eternalization and hopeful-enthusiast temporalization) ambiguity. While both the *cinéma-vérité* and the neutral reporter genres involve the construction of political spectacles and, by extension, the dramatization of political discourse (Kellner 2003), they do not do so in the same way across different media texts and institutional contexts. In ND's *cinéma-vérité* broadcast, for example, dramatization occurs within an aesthetic regime of football-playing ritualism which galvanizes the pedagogical politics of coaching, while in SYRIZA's broadcast, the same generic rubric performs its

dramatizing effect within an aesthetic regime of rallying ritualism which gives rise to the ironic politics of celebrity. Finally, in the same institutional setting (SYRIZA) but in different genre, that of neutral reporter, dramatization takes the form of ecstatic impersonalization following an aesthetic regime of disaster ritualism which forges the apocalyptic politics of ideal normality.

Far from being consensus-building grand ideational systems or consent-manufacturing holistic signification systems, these variations of dramatized political discourse hold their own affinity to the historical past and bear their own pragmatic implications for the institutional present as a result of their recontextualizing dynamic. The pedagogical politics of coaching, for instance, eternalizes, through a frame of masculinist hope, the symbol of paternalist modernization on which ND was founded, while the ironic politics of celebrity and the apocalyptic politics of ideal normality temporalize, through a matrix of hedonistic hope and enthusiasm, the symbol of ethno-populist resistance out of which the Greek Left has grown in the post-dictatorship years.

It is these recontextualizing dynamics that embroil the aesthetics of political discourse into an ongoing, yet not coherent and totalizing, process of neoliberal hegemonization. While ND's nationalistic agency and patriarchal ordering, by capitalizing on the moral overtone of austerity (difficult but right decisions), serve to legitimize neoliberal policies of cuts on public spending, they cannot be said to do the same with the wider neoliberal restructuring of the Greek society (e.g. they do not provide a backcloth for the legitimation of state reforms and privatizations). Furthermore, SYRIZA's populist ordering, on the one hand – as the nationalistic backlash of the anti-austerity sentiment (society stands upright) – has an anti-neoliberal but reactionary effect and, on the other – as the leftist commitment to the vindication of the non-privileged – tacitly condones neoliberalism by mystifying the potential 'privileges' of the 'non-privileged' (hope for everyone).

What I have tried to argue in this article is, exactly, that this socially multivalent and multifarious recontextualization of symbolisms lies at the heart of ideology and, therefore, should concern the study of the ideological potential of mediatized political discourse. Overall, the discourse analytic perspective this article advocates seeks to trigger a broader debate around the place and role of ideology in contemporary political communication, thus, it is necessary to be further applied to the study of other platforms of political communication, such as televised debates and social media, and other institutional contexts within which these platforms are used, such as monothematic and far-right/far-left parties.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> As Fairclough defines it, genre is a “relatively stable set of conventions that is associated with and partly enacts a socially ratified type of activity” (1992, 284), that is, a genre constitutes the discursive manifestation of an institutional practice (of mediatization).

<sup>2</sup> Although the term ‘text’ is commonly associated, rather restrictively, with written language, in this paper I use ‘text’ in a broader sense to refer to the technological substratum that allows the inscription of a variety of semiotic modes – linguistic, visual, audial, etc. – via which different genres (and, therefore, practices) acquire a material and, by extension, communicable form (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001). In other words, a text constitutes the material instantiation of one or more genres.

<sup>3</sup> The videos of the two broadcasts are available online, in parties’ official YouTube channels, ‘We make the pitch’ (*Νέα Δημοκρατία* 2015) and ‘Hope’ (*ΣΥΡΙΖΑ* 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Paternalist modernization carries the personal imprint of the party’s founder, Konstantinos Karamanlis, who has been credited with the democratization and modernization of Greece after the collapse of military junta in 1974 and, seminally, with the country’s accession to the then European Economic Community (Pappas 2014).

<sup>5</sup>The moral vindication of the non-privileged was rhetorically introduced to the Greek political discourse by PASOK's founder, Andreas Papandreou, who envisaged the 'non-privileged' as an undifferentiated and indivisible whole, the 'people' in general, who righteously resist against domestic and foreign forces of exploitation and oppression (Pappas 2014).

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